

October 29, 2023

This Week: 9:30 a.m. Reading Service
6:30 p.m. Catechism Reading Service (LD21)
Classes after the morning service

Next Week: 9:30 a.m. Catechism Reading Service (LD22)
6:30 p.m. Reading Service
Classes after the morning service

Wednesday: Rev. Slingerland hopes to serve us for a Reformation Day service at 7:00 p.m.
-All the Lord willing-

Collections: Today: 1st General Fund Next week: 1st General Fund
2nd Alpha Center 2nd NAGMission

We Remember in Prayer:

-Our widows and lonely ones, the unborn, prodigal sons and daughters, and all those with hidden crosses.

MEDITATIONS

“...As it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Rom. 1:17)

On October 31, we remember an event which was used in God's providence, for God's church on earth. Martin Luther was a professor of Divinity at the University of Wittenberg. Luther not only taught Bible exegesis at the university, but also was a regional vicar over many cloisters and a preacher in the town's main church. There he nailed his 95 theses to the chapel door. Originally, the theses were meant to start an academic debate with Johann Tetzel, who promoted the sale of indulgences for dead souls. However, God decided differently.

A movement started, which could not be stopped. It exposed the false doctrine and bad practices of the Catholic church, which led their constituents further and further away from God's Word, into spiritual darkness, for the church's financial gain. Luther, who endured severe soul struggles, was led by God's Spirit and by grace out of depressing darkness to a marvelous light. He was not able to remain silent any longer about the deceptive practices, especially of the Pope's henchman: Tetzel. Luther was used by God to show the people that the only way to salvation was: "Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide and Sola Gratia". (By Scripture alone, by faith alone and by grace alone.)

In the past, Luther also had been tangled in the web of tricky deceptions by the Catholic church. He diligently looked for an answer on the question that plagued his guilty soul: "How can I find a merciful God?" He tried to flee from his sins by joining a cloister, by doing penance and by punishing himself. He tried to follow the rules of the church scrupulously and nearly tormented himself to death to find peace for his soul. He was persecuted by God's justice which demanded payment. Luther hated the word justice, because it cursed and damned him. He said to God: "Won't You ever stop plaguing me with Your wrath?" Luther had loathed Paul's words in our text until Heaven enlightened him in his extreme distress. Luther understood that Paul, when using the word "Justitia", did not mean justice which God demands from man, but instead, righteousness which God (in Christ) grants a true sinner.

Suddenly, Luther comprehended that grace is not earned by our good works, but granted by God in Christ, through faith. Faith is a gift of God. The Way to Heaven (Christ), Which was hidden for Luther, became the Gate through which a righteous people may enter. Rejoicing, loosened from the restraining band of sin and death, Luther was enabled to boldly witness against the deceitful and comfortless doctrine of the Catholic church, which shows people that salvation is earned by their good works.

All the above is still very pertinent today. The Catholic church still teaches this doctrine. Unfortunately, many so called "Protestants" err by teaching that there is some good in man or that he has a free will. Scripture is robbed of Her power, equating it to the word of men, subjecting it to the critical human spirit. God's justice is ignored or given a different, erroneous meaning. Grace is no more grace. Sin and ignorance keeps these people in spiritual captivity.

Reader: Do you understand that you cannot exist before the majesty of God? Do you experience guilt before God? Do you wrestle for grace and for that righteousness that saves from eternal death? There is still no other way that leads to eternal life than by losing everything that is of self. It is still 'Sola Scriptura' (Scripture alone) Which can shed light in your soul, by the application of God's Spirit. It is still 'Sola Fide' (faith alone) which teaches you to reject everything outside of God and Christ and which finds life in God's justice. It is still 'Sola Gratia' (grace alone) which saves, frees (releases) from restraints and gives liberty to the captives. (Isaiah 61:1). Seek daily to know the core of the Reformation in your own heart and life. By God's grace, justification of unconverted people is still possible in these times of sin, ignorance and freewill. May it be to His honor and glory.

*The Lord is just and merciful, And gracious to the meek;
He saved me when I cried to Him, Tho' I was poor and weak.*

Psalter 312:3

~Rev. J. Baaijens

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth it and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Ephesians 5:29

If we gave full attention to the prophet Isaiah's argument in Isaiah 54, we would be more moved by the exhortation that is set down here: no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth it and cherisheth it.

Consider the care that each one of us has for himself; how tenderly we nourish all the parts of our body, even to the little toe of the foot (so to speak), how carefully we watch that nothing is lacking, and how prudent we are in every respect so that if any part of us is ill, we endeavor to find a remedy to keep ourselves in good health. Would that everyone of us really thought in that way, for it would surely be a means of teaching us to do likewise to our neighbors, or other people.

Much more this admonition ought to affect the attitude of fathers to their children, children to their fathers, husbands to their wives, wives to their husbands, and similarly we in the mutual relationships into which it has pleased our Lord to join us in a close bond.

If anyone responds to this, saying, "None of this applies to me," it necessarily follows that you do not belong to the family of mankind. For, as I said before, God has created and nourished us so we should all be like one lump. For though there are many fingers and sinews in a person's body, that does not stop them from being all one thing, nor is any one member hindered from nurturing another as well as himself. ~John Calvin

Think about the amount of care you invest in yourself. How would your relationships with others (especially your husband or wife) change if you cared for them with the same care that you show yourself? If you get something in your eye, for example, you immediately work on relieving your discomfort. Do you treat your spouse this way, too, providing him or her immediate attention when trouble comes?

Consistory

Elders: Mr. Rick Rozeboom, Mr. Craig Timmer

Deacon: Mr. Norm DeWit

Contacts

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Consistory meets on the first Monday of the month at 10:00 a.m.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CONGREGATION

Sioux Falls, SD



*Let everything that hath breath praise
the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.*

Psalms 150:6

Church Times: 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 or 6:30 p.m.